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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 003051

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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PARIS ALSO FOR POL
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[11.](#) Iran

[12.](#) Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The top story over the weekend was the alleged assassination plot

against PM Olmert in June. Reportedly, the plot which was broken up by Shin Bet and PA security services, involved five Fatah linked individuals who were planning to hit the Prime Minister's motorcade during a visit to Jericho. The news broke on Sunday when Shin Bet head Avraham Diskin told the cabinet that PA security services had released several of those being held. The media quoted Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter as saying that this is a "classic example of the PA's policy of make believe." All media reported that PM Ehud Olmert told reporters accompanying him on his trip to Paris that "what is troubling is the inappropriate way that the suspects were handled. We cannot let this go by, but I also do not intend to stop the efforts at dialogue and the negotiations with the Palestinians." Ha'aretz reported that it sent a correspondent to the prisons where these individuals were held and verified that they were re-arrested on Friday. The paper also questioned the seriousness of the threat by saying that those involved lacked the means and had not devised a plan, rather they were picked up after conversations where the idea was raised were overheard by the Shin Bet. Ha'aretz then questioned the motivation behind the timing and mischaracterization of Dichter's announcement.

All media reported that today PM Olmert will meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and that he will continue to Britain, where he is scheduled to meet with PM Gordon Brown. The media reported that Olmert will discuss efforts to block Iran's nuclear program, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and other bilateral issues. Maariv expects Sarkozy to tell Olmert that now is the time to take risks and that France is not ruling out military action against Iran. Leading media quoted Olmert as saying: "The meeting at Annapolis is not meant to propose or produce solutions, but rather to bolster a negotiations process that should lead to a solution of two states living side by side in peace and security."

Ha'aretz reported that FM Tzipi Livni is calling for the creation of a "negotiation administration" to handle ongoing work on core issues after the Annapolis meeting.

The Jerusalem Post quoted sources in Ramallah as saying that the Bush administration is pressuring Abbas to appoint senior Fatah figure Muhammad Dahlan as his deputy. According to the sources, Abbas has rejected the US demand, triggering a crisis with Washington.

Major media quoted the Israel Antiquities Authority as saying on Sunday that Israeli archaeologists overseeing a controversial dig on the Temple Mount to replace electrical cables, stumbled upon a sealed archaeological level dating back to the era of the First Temple. But the Waqf (Islamic trust), which has de facto control over the mount, denied that any discovery was made, or that Israeli archaeologists were even supervising the work.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday Vice President Dick Cheney reiterated the Bush administration's insistence that Iran would not be able to acquire nuclear bombs. The Jerusalem Post quoted PM Olmert as saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin assured him that Russia would not "put Israel in a place where it could be threatened." Ha'aretz reported that during his visit to the IMF, Finance Minister Roni Bar-On is trying to build an economic front against Iran's nuclear program. On Sunday Maariv reported that former US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross told the newspaper that there were no discernible signs of an impending American strike on Iran. Over the weekend major media quoted Gen. Mahmoud Chaharbaghi, a top Revolutionary Guards Corps commander, as boasting that Iran is capable of firing 11,000 rockets into enemy bases in the first minute following an attack.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post cited ABC News as saying that Israel obtained detailed photographs from inside an alleged Syrian nuclear facility prior to carrying out an air strike on September 6.

All media reported that Israel received from Hizbullah a 21-year-old letter sent by MIA Ron Arad to his wife Tami.

Ha'aretz reported that James Roche, a former Secretary of the USAF, told the newspaper this week that if Israel and the US achieve an interceptor that its 80 percent effective against ballistic threats, they will be sufficiently prepared to deal with such threats. Roche

is visiting Israel for the first convention of the Israel Missile Defense Association.

The Jerusalem Post cited a draft study by the mainstream, liberal Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies that an Israeli pullout from Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem as part of a peace accord with the Palestinians without an agreement regarding the Old City and the Temple Mount will not resolve the dispute over Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Post reported that NGOs have accused settlers and security forces of increased violence against Palestinians in Hebron since last spring.

The Jerusalem Post reported that NATO Deputy Secretary-General Claudio Bisogniero arrived in Israel for a two-day visit on Sunday, three weeks after taking up his new post.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post printed an AP wire report that David Peleg and Khaled Ghazal, respectively the Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors to Poland, visited the former Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex together on Sunday in a rare joint act of reflection on the Holocaust.

Over the weekend Yediot and The Jerusalem Post reported that Kadima MK Majalli Whbee, a Druze who was close to former PM Ariel Sharon and whom Sharon sent on numerous diplomatic missions in the Arab world, will be appointed deputy FM next week.

Leading media reported that the far Right is disseminating a new film demanding the release of Yitzhak Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir.

11. Iran:

Summary:

Liberal op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "President Bush must have envisioned the War of Gog and Magog when he gave Israel the status of the spark that will ignite World War III.... But why place Israel in the center of events?"

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Do Ehud Olmert, whose name is linked with the Second Lebanon War, and George Bush, the architect of Iraqi quagmire, have the moral authority to pull the entire Middle East into an adventure that is even more dangerous than their previous two put together?"

Daniel Levy, one of the main drafters of the Geneva initiative, wrote in Ha'aretz: "A strategy of deterrence and containment vis-a-vis a nuclear Iran is preferable to a military option, even from an Israeli point of view."

Block Quotes:

1I. "No Thanks, Mr. President"

Liberal op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/21): "President Bush must have envisioned the War of Gog and Magog when he gave Israel the status of the spark that will ignite World War III.... This makes me want to say to the President: 'No thank you. Don't make Israel your chief concern.' Iran under its current leadership is indeed a dangerous state, and its efforts to attain nuclear weapons must be thwarted. But why place Israel in the center of events?.... The head of the world's greatest power should lead the effort to foil the Iranian threat, and he seems to be taking this complex role upon himself so far. Bush's efforts -- diplomatic and economic pressure as well as increasingly explicit threats to employ military force against Iran -- are the way to tackle the problem. Israel should be left outside the picture.... These guidelines also apply to the Israeli government: It should not take a prominent role in the international efforts against Iran. It should also not believe and act as if the nuclearization of Iran is intended against it primarily....

Sixty-two years after the horror engendered by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it would be best to bring redemption closer through other, earthly and controllable measures -- for example, by striving to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians. This is a measure that is likely to neutralize the Iranian bomb."

II. "The Iraqi Lesson"

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (10/21): "What is the source of this confidence that an Iranian nuclear bomb is necessarily an existential threat to the State of Israel and the free world?.... The United States conducted itself with outrageous amateurism in Iraq. Only after the fact did it become evident just how superficial its prior knowledge of Iraq was. It ousted from power a ruler whose advantages outweighed his disadvantages, and created a hothouse for terrorism in the heart of the Arab world. Israel, its political, historical and intelligence ally, failed to inform the US of its errors on time and, as such, is party to the fiasco. Israel, which has a tremendous amount of intimate knowledge about its neighbors, should have pounded on the table. It should have told its naove friend that a weak dictator was preferable over a weak democracy. But, then, just as now, it was enamored by the sound of the war drums beating. The citizens of the Middle East have learned their lesson. Before another adventure is begun on our backs, we demand to have a look at the dossier.... And there is also the personal question. Do Ehud Olmert, whose name is linked with the Second Lebanon War, and George Bush, the architect of Iraqi quagmire, have the moral authority to pull the entire Middle East into an adventure that is even more dangerous than their previous two put together?"

III. "A Green Light to the Americans"

Daniel Levy, one of the main drafters of the Geneva initiative, wrote in Ha'aretz (10/22): "The lesson that Iran can learn from events in recent years is that its membership in the axis of evil with nuclear weapons means adequate conditions for negotiations (North Korea); this is not the case in the absence of nuclear weapons (Iraq).... An Israeli operation against Iran that will not get a green light from America is not an option. In any case, such an operation does not ensure success. However, its consequences -- responses by Iran and the Muslim world -- will almost undoubtedly be destructive -- in particular to Israel. Thus, and with all the difficulty to accept such a conclusion, a strategy of deterrence and containment vis-a-vis a nuclear Iran is preferable to a military option, even from an Israeli point of view.... Many experts have advocated the diplomatic option. So have American think tanks and politicians. But official Washington continues to demonstrate skepticism. An Israeli green light could tilt the balance within the administration. Any Israeli leader who seriously intends to 'stop Iran' must relegate to the dustbin the comparison with 1938 and provide quiet diplomatic advice to Uncle Sam."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Former foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote in the

mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The only way of wrenching Syria free from Iran's bear hug is to include it in the regional peace plan."

Block Quotes:

"To Produce a Change of Heart in Damascus"

Former foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/21): "An Israeli-Arab peace agreement requires a comprehensive approach that will lay the foundations for solving the conflict.... The peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, just like the American veto against negotiations with Syria, indicate that we have reverted to a 'Palestine first' approach. But the chances of this approach

being successful are depressingly meager. When the American sponsor still refrains from committed mediation of the kind done by Clinton, the parties are incapable of meeting even the minimal demands to reach a final status arrangement. This failure will have dire repercussions for the entire region. The Syria-Iran-Hamas-Hizbullah axis will be bolstered in its opposition to Americanization in the region. And when President Abu Mazen is humiliated and defeated, the scenario of a third Intifada does not seem so delusional. That is why it is crucial that Syria be removed from the circle of war.... The only way of wrenching Syria free from Iran's bear hug is to include it in the regional peace plan. But, regrettably, precisely because of their isolation in the region and because of the paranoid nature of the regime in Damascus, the Syrians are not expected -- as the United States hopes will happen -- to abandon their alliances and relations with terrorists as a precondition for peace talks. A change of heart in Damascus will be the result of negotiations, not a precondition to them. The idea that the Israeli-Arab peace process is a choice between the Palestinian track and the Syrian track has proven itself to be a dangerous mistake. Neither of the parties, neither the Palestinians nor the Syrians, will agree to be excluded from the process. It is not too late yet to begin the peace process once again as a comprehensive, regional initiative and to invite Syria to the Annapolis conference. In addition to examining once again the state of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the conference should also be a platform for the Israeli-Syrian channel and a forum in which the parties will agree on procedure and means of communication. The conference will not mark the end of the Damascus-Tehran axis but it certainly might be the beginning of a process in which that connection begins to weaken."

JONES